# Lamo language

**Lamo** (also called **mBo**; IPA: mboˀ; **’Bo skad**) is an unclassified Sino-Tibetan language spoken in Tshawarong, Zogang County, Chamdo Prefecture, Tibet. It was recently documented by Suzuki & Nyima (2016). sMad skad, a closely related language variety, is also spoken in Tshawarong.

Suzuki & Nyima (2018) document the Kyilwa 格瓦 variety of Dongba Township 东坝乡.

| Lamo | |
|---|---|
| mBo | |
| ’Bo skad | |
| **Native to** | China |
| **Region** | Zogang County, Chamdo Prefecture, Tibet |
| **Language family** | Sino-Tibetan<br>▪ (unclassified); Qiangic? rGyalrongic?<br>▪ Chamdo<br>▪ **Lamo** |
| **Language codes** | |
| **ISO 639-3** | – |

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## Names

Lamo is referred to by the *Changdu Gazetteer* (2005: 819)[1] as *Dongba* 东坝话, as it is spoken in Dongba Township 东坝乡, Zogang County.

Khams Tibetan people refer to Lamo speakers as *mBo* or *mBo mi* (’bo mi). Traditionally, Lamo speakers also referred to themselves as *Po mi*, although this autonym is not known by all Lamo speakers. They refer to their own language as *Lamo*. Some Lamo speakers also refer to their town language as *ˊmbo hkə*.[2]

Lamo autonyms by location (gSerkhu, discussed below, is a minor mutually intelligible variety):[2]

| Language | Autonym | Location |
|---|---|---|
| Lamo | [la55 mo55] | Dongba Township 东坝乡, Dzogang County |
| Lamo | [la55 mɛ53] | Zhonglinka Township 中林卡乡, Dzogang County |
| gSerkhu | [sə55 khu55] | Shangchayu Town 下察隅镇, Dzayul County |

## Demographics

Lamo is spoken by about 4,000 speakers, with 2,000 in Dongba Township, and 2,000 in Zhonglinka Township. Both townships are located along the Nujiang River in Dzogang County.[2]

Lamo and gSerkhu villages by township:[2]

| Language | Township, County | Villages |
|---|---|---|
| Lamo | Dongba Township 东坝乡, Dzogang | Junyong 军拥村, Gewa 格瓦村, Puka 普卡村, Bazuo, and Jiaba 加坝村 |
| Lamo | Zhonglinka Township 中林卡乡, Dzogang | Shizika 十字卡村, Luoba 洛巴村, Ruoba 若巴村, Wadui 瓦堆村, and Wamei 瓦美村 |
| gSerkhu | Shangchayu Town 上察隅镇, Dzayul | Benzhui 本堆村, Muzong, Cuixi 翠兴村, and Sangba |

# Dialects

There are two dialects:[2]

- **Lamo** (Tibetan name for the language: mBo-skad)
- **Lamei**

There are 5 Lamo-speaking village clusters in Dongba Township, which are Kyilwa, Phurkha, Gewa, Gyastod and Gyasmed. The remaining village clusters, out of a total of 13 village clusters in Dongba Township, are Khams Tibetan-speaking villages.[2]

Lamei is spoken by 1,500 to 2,000 people in 5 village clusters in is spoken in Zhonglinka Township. Sitrikhapa, Wangtod, Wangmed, Rongba, and Laba village clusters have only Lamei speakers. Woba, Pula, and Zuoshod village clusters have both Lamei and Khams Tibetan speakers.[2]

**gSerkhu** is a variety of Lamo, with which it is mutually intelligible. Khams Tibetan speakers refer to the language as **Sikhu**. gSerkhu is spoken by about 400 people (80 households) in 4 villages of the gSerkhu Valley, which are Benzhui, Muzong, Cuixi, and Sangba, all located in Shangchayu Town, Dzayul County. Dzayul County also has Khams Tibetan speakers who had originally migrated from the Lamo-speaking area of Dongba Township, Dzogang County.[2]

# Classification

Suzuki & Nyima (2016, 2018) suggest that Lamo may be a Qiangic language. Guillaume Jacques (2016)[3] suggests that mBo is a rGyalrongic language belonging to the Stau-Khroskyabs (Horpa-Lavrung) branch.

Suzuki & Nyima (2018) note that Lamo is closely related to two other recently documented languages of Chamdo, eastern Tibet, namely Larong (spoken in the Lancang River valley of Zogang County and Markam County) and Drag-yab (spoken in southern Zhag'yab County).

Lamo compared with Written Tibetan and Proto-Tibeto-Burman (Nyima & Suzuki 2019):[2]

| Gloss | Lamo | Written Tibetan | Proto-Tibeto-Burman |
|---|---|---|---|
| one | ˉdə | gcig | *tyak ~ *g-t(y)ik |
| four | ˉlə̰ | bzhi | *b-ləy |
| seven | ˉn̥i | bdun | *s-ni-s |
| ten | ˉʁɑ | bcu | *ts(y)i(y) ~ *tsyay |
| you | ˉnə | khyod | *na-ŋ |
| horse | ˊre | rta | *s/m-rang |
| blood | ˉse | khrag | *s-hywəy-t |
| urine | ˉqo | gcin | *kum |

# Lexicon

Suzuki & Nyima (2016) list the following Lamo words.

| Gloss | Lamo |
|---|---|
| one | dəˀ |
| two | naˀ |
| three | sɟ̃ɻ |
| four | lə̰ˀ |
| five | ɴʷə̰ˀ |
| six | tɕiɻ |
| seven | n̥iˀ |
| eight | ʰdʑəˀ |
| nine | ᵑgoˀ |
| ten | ʁɑˀ |
| hundred | ʰdʑiˀ |
| 1.SG pronoun | ŋaˀ |
| 2.SG pronoun | nəˀ |
| 3.SG pronoun | kəˀ |
| blood | saˀ |
| urine | qoɻ |
| meat | tɕʰiˀ |
| iron | ʰtɕɑˀ |
| needle | ʁɑɻ |
| fish | ɲɛɻ (Tibetic loan) |
| pig | pʰoˀ ɦu |
| horse | reɻ |
| sky | nɑˀ |
| land | sɛˀ tɕʰɛ (Tibetic loan) |
| sand | ɕeɻ mɛ (Tibetic loan) |
| hillside | ɴɢaˀ |
| snow | jʉˀ |
| road | tɕɯˀ |
| water | tɕəˀ |
| eat | wəˀ- |
| sleep | nəˀ- |

# Morphology

Directional prefixes in Lamo:[2]

- **n-**: *ˊnə- sᵲ* ‘kill’, *ˊna-qɑ* ‘chew’, *ˊnu-pho* ‘drop’
- **th**-: *ˊtho-xɯ* ‘go’, *ˊtho-ndzo* ‘gather’, *ˊthe-ji* ‘sell’
- **k-**: *ˊka-tɵ* ‘buy’, *¯ko’-ɞa* ‘break into pieces’
- **t-**: *¯tu’-rɑ* ‘receive’, *¯tə’-tɞa* ‘wear (a hat)’
- **l-**: *¯la’-mbo* ‘overthrow’
- **w-**: *¯wo’-ɞa* ‘tear up’, *ˊwu-ndzə* ‘eat’

Directional prefixes with *le* ‘come’ in Lamo:[2]

- ***ˊne**-le*: ‘come downwards/come down’
- ***ˊthe**-le*: ‘(he) has arrived’ (perfect/aorist only)
- ***k-***: (does not occur)
- ***ˊtə’**-le*: ‘arrive upwards/come here close to the speaker’
- ***¯le**-le*: ‘come to a place closer to the speaker but not necessarily near them’
- ***ˊwu**-le*: ‘come towards the speaker on the same horizontal level’

# References


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